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P9, Bill 13, CD2 R

improving the quality of lives of pets and their people.

Testimony by Alicia Maluafiti
In strong support of Bill 13 regarding the Executive Operating Budget

Honolulu City Council
Wednesday, June 3, 2015 – 9 am.

Aloha Chair Martin and City Council Members,

I am testifying in support of Bill 13 and specifically the funding appropriated to Poi Dogs & Popoki for spay and neuter services through The Big Fix, our mobile clinic. In one year, The Big Fix sterilized almost 2500 cats and dogs on Oahu and most of those were in rural and at risk or underserved areas of Oahu. Mahalo to the Council and City for recognizing the value of a mobile clinic.

Hawaii's favorable climate allows cats and dogs to go into heat more frequently which contributes to our island's pet overpopulation challenges. Because of our climate, families in Hawaii tend to allow their pets to stay outside especially in low income areas where it is culturally accepted. This also increases the likelihood that animals will stray especially if they are not sterilized. The number one reason cited by families about why they don't sterilize their pets is cost. So despite the fact that these pet owners are already struggling to care for animals they currently own, their pets produce litter after litter. Animals that go stray or are dumped because they can no longer be cared for are seen across the island congregating and reproducing in our parks, beaches, homeless camps and areas of the community where kind and compassionate people feed them. These areas then become breeding ground for feral animal populations.

The City & County will spend over \$4 million in tax dollars to manage the lost, abandoned and stray animals on Oahu through the animal contract. Yet the cost of sterilization is less than the cost of one euthanasia. Free or low-cost sterilization programs have proven to be cost-effective in municipalities across the nation, reducing the cost of animal control and improving community and societal health. Communities that have established sterilization programs have seen euthanasia numbers drop by 30 to 60 percent. And lower animal admissions plus a lower euthanasia rate equals tax dollar savings. Add to that goal is a mandated microchip identification policy and lost pets will find their way home more than those that have no ID – dogs are 2.5 times more likely to go home, and cats are 22 times more likely. Again – cost savings to the City as animals spend less time at the shelter and less time waiting to be adopted (if deemed adoptable).

We have turned no one away. The Waimanalo woman with 14 dogs, 2 litters of puppies, and 2 pregnant mommies. She pays \$25 twice a month. The Central Oahu Regional Park where we have sterilized more than 50 cats, pulled 2 pets that were dumped, and removed 20 sick, aging, and disabled cats along with dozens of kittens. The dogs and cats at every beach park being cared for by the homeless. We have sterilized all but one dog at Waimanalo Beach Park and continue to sterilize the animals at other parks and beaches. EBT, Medicaid, Medicare, disabled, unemployed, and the homeless. This grant will enable us to continue helping them all. And in the long run, the City and the taxpayers will recognize the cost savings.

Mahalo for your consideration.

MISC. COM. 2036